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HOMEMAkers' CHAT

Release Monday, October 24, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SARDINES." Items of interest to consumers, from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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"Speaking of sardines," begins our Washington correspondent, "do you know that the sardine packers came off with a good record last year? Food and Drug inspectors did their usual checking, and sampling, and examining, but not a single shipment had to be removed from interstate commerce.

"So, still speaking of sardines, I'm going to give you one of my favorite recipes -- Baked Sardines on Toast. A very good luncheon dish. With baked sardines on toast, a crisp vegetable salad, and a cup of hot coffee, you'll fare very well.

"But first, let's have our sardine lesson, so we'll be 'intelligent consumers' when we go to the grocery store to buy this popular fish." (If we learn all these facts our correspondent has gathered from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, we'll be so smart the grocer won't recognize us!)

Quoting her report, directly: "The name sardine comes from the island of Sardinia, in the Mediterranean Sea. Sardines include the pilchard, the bristling or sprat, and the herring. To carry out the purposes of the Pure Food Law, and to protect the public, all canned sardines bear labels showing the place of production -- that is, the country or the State -- and the nature of the ingredients used in preserving or flavoring the fish.

"For example, imported sardines bearing such labels as 'Norwegian Sardines in Oil,' or 'Norwegian Smoked Sardines in Oil,' were caught near the shores of Norway. Sardines caught near the shores of France may be labeled 'French Sardines in Oil.'

"Sardines caught near our own shores, and packed in the United States, may be labeled, (if packed with added edible salad oil such as cottonseed or olive), 'American Sardines Packed in Oil,' 'Maine Sardines Packed in Oil,' or 'California Sardines Packed in Oil.'

"These small fish vary in size, and consequently the number in each can varies. Sometimes they're packed in mustard sauce, or tomato sauce, instead of oil. If so, that fact is stated on the label. If the fish are packed in olive oil, the label will probably so state. If some other oil is used, the label may declare the oil to be salad oil. Sometimes the fish are smoked before canning, and often such smoked sardines are labeled 'kippered sardines.'

"Sardines should be differentiated from anchovies, which are a definite species of fish, put up and sold under their own name.

"Fishing for California sardines is carried on from three to 100 miles from the canneries. The sardines are unloaded at the cannery within 12 hours after they are caught. At the cannery, the fish are scaled, cut and cleaned. After that, packing methods vary, but in the method used most generally the fish are packed raw in cans by hand, and cooked by steam in the open cans. Then the lids are sealed, the cans washed and given a final cooking.

"Before the cans are sealed, they pass under an automatic sauce machine, which adds to each can about two ounces of either tomato sauce or mustart sauce. Nowadays, most of the California pack is put up with tomato sauce. In the final cooking, the cans are processed for 75 to 90 minutes, at 240 degrees Fahrenheit, under 10 pounds pressure. Every sardine comes out of that final cooking most thoroughly sterilized.

"Sometimes the sealed cans are dipped in a tank of lacquer before labeling. The lacquer retards rusting, which might occur in damp, tropical countries, and then too it gives the cans a golden yellow color which is popular in some markets. On the label you will find the quantity-of-contents statement required by the Pure Food Law. The oval cans average 16 ounces -- a full pound -- net weight, including sardines and sauce, but to be on the safe side some manufacturers label the contents of the can as 15 ounces.

"Not all sardines are packed in oval cans. Sometimes they're packed with brine, in tall, round cans. These styles come in three sizes -- principally in 8-ounce and 1 pound cans, but also, sometimes, in 12 ounce cans.

"Sardines are also packed in quarter-pound square cans. Young fish, 5 to 7 inches long, are used in this style pack. They are fried in cotton-seed oil, or cooked by steaming or by baking, and after canning are kept in storage three to six months before being put on the market. The flavor improves during the first six months the fish are in the cans. These quarter-pound, flat, square cans are sometimes wrapped in wax paper, with labels on the wrapper. The fish in the ovals and in the quarter pound cans may be put up in tomato sauce, mustard, spices, olive oil, or cottonseed oil."

And here's the recipe for Baked Sardines on toast. You will need two small cans of sardines, one tablespoon of butter, one tablespoon of lemon juice, and a slice of onion. Drain the oil from the sardines. To this oil, add the butter, the lemon juice, and the onion. Heat this mixture. Arrange the sardines on thin slices of toast. Bake in a moderate oven for about ten minutes, basting several times with the oil mixture.

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